



The fluidity of the main level includes an open kitchen, dining and living area, with easy access to the deck.

WORTH THE JOURNEY

Committed to creating the sort of home that served her family, Brittany Richards spearheaded a massive renovation of their Wildridge home

by LAURA LIEFF • after Photos by DOMINIQUE TAYLOR • family photo by PETALS & IVY PHOTOGRAPHY

AS THE SAYING GOES, home is where the heart is and, in 2022, longtime Eagle County local Brittany Richards was ready to upgrade the heart of her home. Her 1982 duplex was one of the first builds in Wildridge and when she and her husband, Bryant, had the opportunity to purchase it in 2014, they were ecstatic. “The house was perfect for us and our dog, Bentley, at that time in our lives as it had three bedrooms, three baths, two levels, and 2,200 square feet.” But when Richards

became pregnant with their son, Brayson, in 2018, she knew they would need more space. “When we bought the house, it was clear that building up was an option — but we didn’t know what that would entail,” she explains.

As they contemplated selling the house and moving versus doing a full renovation, they quickly realized they wanted to stay. “Our view of Beaver Creek made me never want to leave and the open space above us [the Western Avon Preserve] was another important amenity,” Richards adds. “While pregnant, I

was already visualizing what was possible.” A big reason behind choosing to remodel rather than sell was that the home’s panoramic views will never be obstructed thanks to a utility easement, which will most likely not be used. Additionally, the land behind the home is too steep to build anything new.

Before

While the duplex was an exciting first home adventure, there were dated aspects that Richards always knew she wanted to fix, including the 1980s-era

textured walls, red heater lights above the showers, old carpet and deteriorating wood floors. Other issues included the sunken living room — people had to either step up or down when entering and exiting the room — and the “peninsula with lots of wasted space” which encompassed the laundry room and full bathroom, both of which were situated right off the kitchen. Instead, all the bedrooms were in the basement, which was getting crowded with all three family members living in close quarters. So, in addition

to making the kitchen and living room more well-appointed and user-friendly, Richards decided to add a third floor primary suite that would feature sweeping views, a large walk-in closet and the double vanity bathroom she always wanted.

Once the decision was made that a total renovation was necessary, Richards noticed other parts of the house that needed updates. “The floors, carpets, and walls started showing a lot of wear and tear,” she explains. “When you dive into a project of this magnitude it turns into ‘if you’re touching this, you might as well do this, and then you have to update this.’ Next thing you know, it’s a full remodel.” To ease her family into what she knew was going to be a massive endeavor, Richards started with the demolition and reconstruction of the deck which began at the end of 2020, paused for the winter, and then was completed in July 2021.

When it was time for the home remodel to begin, Richards realized that overseeing the enormous project would take a great deal of her time and concentration. Therefore, after 15 years in the luxury events business, she made the tough decision to put her career on hold to supervise the complete renovation and design of the duplex. In the fall of 2022,



The Richards family.

“NOW THAT THE KITCHEN, LIVING ROOM AND DECK ARE ON ONE EVEN LEVEL, THEY ARE THE HEART OF OUR HOME AND THE PLACES WE SPEND THE MOST TIME.”



The home's unobstructed views were a major reason the family remodeled the home instead of moving to a new one.



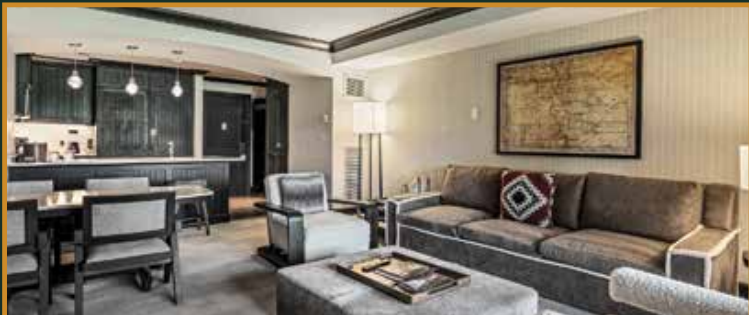
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Richards closed out her final event planning season and began what would become an almost two-year sabbatical. “It worked out because I was at a point in my career where taking a break made sense,” she explains.

During

Richards experienced many enlightening moments throughout these household and career life changes — including the realization that she loved immersing herself in the home and design world. For inspiration, she went to local open houses and the Denver Design Center. Next, she put together her team — general contractor Peter Sampson of Onsite Management and architect John Martin of Martin Manley Architects — which took a significant amount of time and consultation. With her team in place, Richards was excited to get going but there was a bit of a roadblock. Because the duplex was built in 1982, the Town of Avon had no architectural plans on file, so Martin was tasked with creating “As Built” plans. Doing so meant he had to produce the initial drawings of the home just so they could tear it down and rebuild.

While Richards found a lot of parallels between event planning and renovating a home — especially in terms of the numerous details and decisions — she credits both Sampson and Martin for their expertise, recommendations and help with the overall project management. Although Richards relied on their knowledge, as well as help from both her mother (who has completed multiple renovations

over the years) and her best friend from the design world, Richards handled the majority of the design for the entire house.

Along with the seemingly endless details and decisions she made on a daily basis, Richards had to find a place for her family to live for the next year, as well as a place to put all of their belongings. “We found a storage unit and then luckily my husband’s colleagues had a rental available for the time period we needed,” she explains. The family of three moved into an 800-square-foot condo in West Vail and, with the exception of Brayson’s bed and everyone’s clothes, their stuff moved into a storage unit. “Going from 2,200 to 800 square feet was an eye-opening experience,” Richards says. “We were living on top of each other and the hardest part was putting our life aside and into storage.”

While she describes living out of bins for a year as “confined chaos,” she also says that doing so was the right call. “It was an adventure and not the easiest time in our lives but it was for the greater good. We met a lot of people, our son learned to ride a bike on that street, and we were right on the Vail Village bus route, which was convenient for skiing and spending time in town. That location made our time there feel like a year-long staycation.”

After

In June 2024, their newly designed and renovated home was ready to be lived in again. They now have 3,000 square feet and an interior that Richards describes as “neutral mountain modern.” The kitchen and living room have become a flowing, connected open area that is ideal for entertaining and hanging out as a family.

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ABOUT RENOVATING, MY
ADVICE IS TO THOUGHTFULLY
PUT TOGETHER A PLAN
FOR YOUR FAMILY.”

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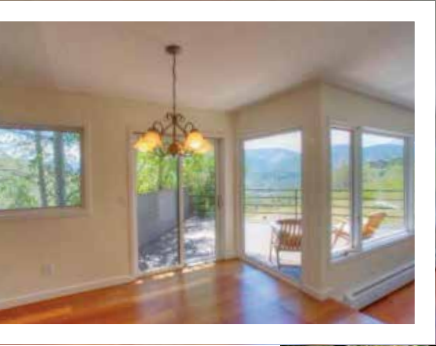


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The deck was one of the first aspects of the project to be completed, and is a favorite spot for the family.



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MOUNTAIN HOMES VAIL

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair sitting in a yellow armchair. She is in a cozy living room with a fireplace, a Christmas tree, and a brown leather sofa. A coffee table with a candle and a bowl of greenery is in front of her.



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Additionally, the glass doors off the living room open up onto the deck, providing the panoramic view of Beaver Creek that started the journey. She adds, "The new layout is inviting and makes hosting a lot more fun!"

While the entire house is stunning, the "showstoppers" are the aforementioned main level areas and the primary suite, which was created after popping the top of the home. "Now that the kitchen, living room and deck are on one even level they are the heart of our home and the places we spend the most time," Richards explains. "Those spaces have become a relaxing and inviting environment that flows so everyone can be together." The fluidity of the main level was extremely important to Richards as she enjoys hosting and having everyone hang out as a group. "Before the renovation, those areas were tight and choppy and didn't have any flow. Also, the sunken living room was not conducive to big groups. Now everything feels more cohesive."

As for the primary suite, Richards says that building an entire floor for Bryant and herself was a game-changer. "Having more space in general, as well as a large walk-in closet and a double vanity for the first time, was key," she explains. "Those amenities were never options before but, post-kid, we felt they were important. We also finally have more room for our clothes!"

When asked if she would recommend the full remodel route to others, she says "absolutely" and urges everyone to take their time and listen to the people around them. For example, she initially wanted to start the renovation process when Brayson was a newborn but was advised to wait. "I'm glad I listened to the professionals," she adds. "For those thinking about renovating, my advice is to thoughtfully put together a plan for your family. Keep in mind that it may not go exactly as planned, but having an idea of what needs to be done is helpful." She also emphasizes the importance of having the right


team in place. "Interview as many people as you can in each category and make sure they help you stay on track. When you find the right people for the job, you're ready to go."

All's Well That Ends Well

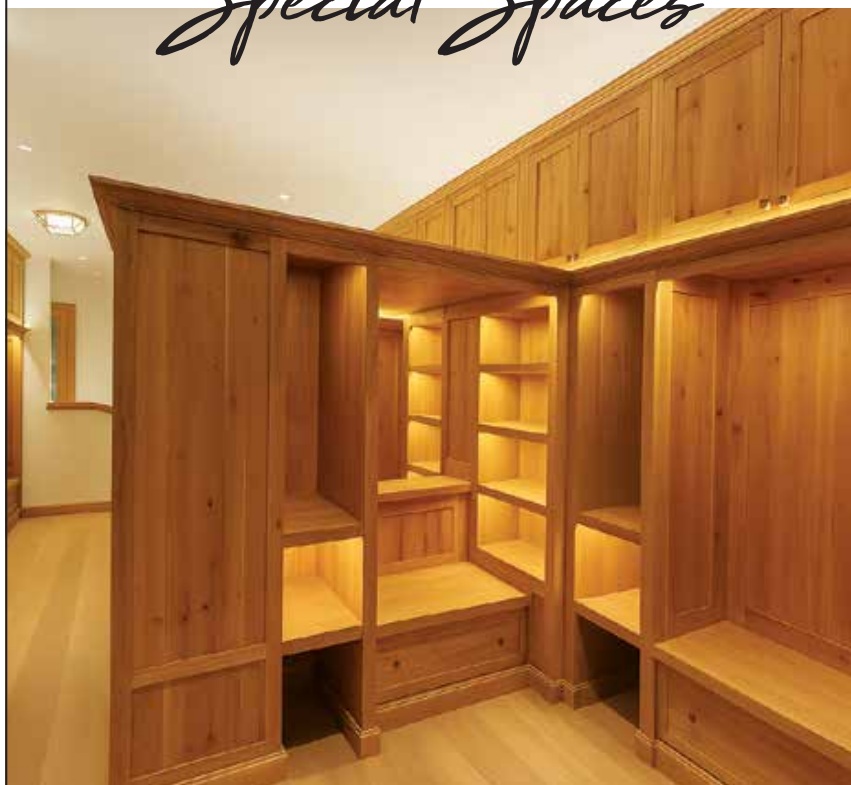
Now that the dust has settled, Richards reflects on the experience as a whole. "Even though it was hard packing up our lives, getting out of our school (Brayson was in preschool at the time) and work rhythms, and being uprooted from our neighborhood moving out and doing everything at once was best for us," she says. "This process was life-consuming for a while and we had to be patient and make sure the timing was right."

Because the entire project entailed a lot of detailed decision-making and project managing on her part, Richards definitely experienced decision fatigue. "My husband and I are both working parents and had a three-year-old child at the time, which was tough because renovating your entire home and living elsewhere for a year is not easy," she explains. "When you start a project like this you have absolutely no idea how many small choices need to be made so 'decision fatigue' was an understatement!"

Fortunately, Richards' team helped her through all the inevitable modifications and adjustments that come with this kind of endeavor. "You go into it thinking you have everything laid out and planned but there was a lot of pivoting," she adds. "I'm so thankful for Peter because every time I felt anxious or worried, he always made it something to laugh about and always made time to answer my questions."

In the end, Richards and her family got to keep their view and build the home she envisioned. Most importantly, she found the right team and had the best people for her project in place while the family of three survived being displaced for a year. Richards adds, "Be prepared for the unexpected and keep in mind that the destination is worth the journey." 

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